



## Task force snaring fugitives

### Federal agents, local agencies join in tallying 600 state arrests in '04

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By MATT STILES / The Dallas Morning News

Adrián Rodríguez, implicated in a June 11 gas station robbery and killing at Inwood Road and I-35E, eluded Dallas homicide detectives for a week.

Terriek Romond Dunn, sought in another Dallas slaying in May, disappeared for two months.

And Tony Lee Williams, wanted in the April shootings of his wife and daughter, fled to Florida.

The three now sit in the Dallas County Jail, after some fast work by the D/FW Fugitive Apprehension Strike Team, a new federal-state task force assigned to hunt fugitives accused of violent crimes.

"They literally just put a dragnet around the person they are looking for," said state District Judge Vickers Cunningham. "The coordination of resources has shown substantial results."

The task force, or DFW FAST, is led by the local office of the U.S. Marshals Service and teams police officers and sheriff's deputies with federal agents.

Since it began in January, the group has made about 600 state arrests – including those of accused killers, robbers and drug offenders. About 200 people wanted on federal charges also have been detained.

Mr. Rodríguez, charged with capital murder in the shooting death of Fidel Ramirez, found out how fast.

Mr. Rodríguez, whose bail was set at \$1 million, shot and killed Mr. Ramirez when the 35-year-old Dallas man revealed that he had no money in his wallet, police say.

Trent Touchstone, a supervisory deputy U.S. marshal who leads the task force in Dallas, said the team began looking for Mr. Rodríguez six days after the June 11 shooting. Dallas police had exhausted its leads.

After hours of surveillance, the team, which doesn't reveal its methods, arrested Mr. Rodríguez a week later at 2:15 a.m. in the 5400 block of East Grand Avenue.

"The normal, everyday citizen goes about their business safe and secure because these individuals are doing their work," said Millie DeAnda, executive director of the Greater Dallas Crime Commission. "These guys are out there 24-7 tracking these fugitives."

The task force, which works out of a spare office in a downtown federal building, has 10 deputy marshals, four Dallas police officers, a Fort Worth officer, a single deputy from the Dallas and Tarrant sheriff's

departments, two federal inspector-general agents and two investigators from the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Also on the team are two agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, who are especially valuable because they speak Spanish, Mr. Touchstone said.

Together, the representatives of each agency can pool resources, ideas and informants to track fugitives, said Sgt. Don Peritz, a Dallas sheriff's office spokesman.

"They can find the worst of the worst, with their combined resources, faster than any one singular agency can," he said. "No one agency has all of the resources. That's the beauty of this thing."

In the past, fugitives such as Mr. Dunn – who is charged with gunning down a 17-year-old Dallas man in May – might have been allowed to stay in hiding until authorities ran across him.

The task force members conducted numerous hours of surveillance and interviews, searching for Mr. Dunn. The team arrested him July 7. He is being held on numerous felony charges, including murder, aggravated robbery and aggravated assault.

"Before, if we ran across them, we put them in jail," said Dallas police Deputy Chief Floyd Simpson, who oversees the department's southeast division. "But we didn't have a group of guys dedicated to go out there and get them."

Chief Simpson said the department has referred 42 cases to the task force. Of them, 37 are closed.

"These are hard-core criminals, not ticket violators," he said.

One of the referrals from Dallas police came after the April shooting death of Dwanna Williams, 34, whose 17-year-old daughter was seriously wounded in the attack.

In July, the task force tracked down her husband and the teenager's father, Tony Lee Williams, in Tampa, Fla.

Mr. Touchstone said Mr. Williams, 39, fled there to avoid prosecution. He is charged with murder and aggravated assault and is in the Dallas County Jail with bail set at \$175,000.

DFW FAST is one of more than 80 small task forces led by the U.S. Marshals Service across the country, authorities said. There also are several regional task forces, which are funded by Congress, that cover larger areas.

U.S. Marshal Randy Ely hopes DFW FAST will become one of these larger regional task forces, which would seek fugitives wanted in several Texas cities or parts of Oklahoma.

Marshal Ely, a former deputy chief with the Fort Worth police, said he hopes more local police departments get involved with his team.

"We have just scratched the surface, in my opinion, of how effective we can be," he said.

*Staff writer Jason Trahan contributed to this report.*

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